

SUBTERRANEA BRITANNICA

Bulletin No. 7

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Subterranea Britannica is in association with Société Française D'Étude des Souterrains of France, and Arbeitskreis für Erdstallforschung of Germany.

EDITORIAL

The most important event in 1978 for the Federation is the International Conference in Cambridge on July 13th - 16th. This will be the first Western European Symposium on Man-made Underground Structures and should be an interesting and stimulating occasion, as you will see from the draft programme enclosed with this Bulletin.

We very much hope that many members of the Federation's societies will be able to come to meet each other and our overseas colleagues.

JOHN ALEXANDER.

SUMMARY OF THE SEPTEMBER DAY CONFERENCE

On Saturday 24th September, 1977 at Lucy Cavendish College, Cambridge, the September Day Conference of Subterranea Britannica was held.

After coffee the Annual General Meeting took place which confirmed the present Committee in office and appointed Mr. Nigel Pennick as Publicity Officer. Mr. David Wallington agreed to take over the post of Librarian.

Mr. Rod Le Gear spoke on Deneholes of South-East England (see below) which was illustrated by slides and included one Denehole in somebody's back garden. The promised film was unfortunately cancelled but Mrs. Kay De Brisay kindly stepped in to fill the gap and gave an interesting talk on Salt Workings which was represented by the Red Hills site near Colchester. After Mrs. De Brisay's talk, sherry was served in the Bulman Room and lunch was taken.

The afternoon commenced with Mrs. Sylvia Beamon's discourse on the Royston Cave, which was again illustrated with slides, and a discussion ensued on the iconography of the carvings in that Cave. Brief Communications followed when Mr. Frank Morgan outlined the work being done on a so-called lime-kiln, Barkway Road, Royston which seems likely in fact to be a structure used in connection with storage purposes for lime itself and/or for explosives.

NIGEL PENNICK.

BRIEF NOTES ON DATING THE DOUBLE-TREFOIL DENEHOLES

The vertically shafted excavations known as deneholes have interested antiquaries for many decades.

The most common form of denehole consists of a narrow entrance shaft some 3 ft. to 3 ft. 9 ins. (914 mm. - 1.143 m.) in diameter sunk through the overlying strata (usually Thanet sand or Brickearth) until the chalk is reached. After leaving sufficient chalk for roof thickness, two sets of three chambers were excavated, giving a double clover leaf (or trefoil) ground plan. (Fig. 1.)

A great deal of controversy has existed over the dating of these early mines for chalk for agricultural materials (marl). The dating of a denehole presents many problems. Early investigators tended to concentrate on sectioning the cones of debris at the bottom of the shafts. This method has certain disadvantages: If the shaft was sunk through an older site, artifacts from the shaft's sides would fall in and give false evidence. Also pottery etc. can be washed into an open shaft at a later date.

Double-Trefoil Deneholes (Cont'd)

The unreliability of this method of dating was proved by the writer in 1964 when excavating a denehole at Wilmington, Kent. A fragment of Samian ware was found lying 18 ins. (457.2 mm.) above a Victorian chamber pot! The Roman sherd had been washed in from a site situated uphill from the shaft.

J. E. L. Caiger, of the Kent Archaeological Society, realised that many deneholes are in direct association with old field boundaries and earthworks, so that by investigation of these banks and ditches a date could be given to the shafts.

During the examination of an earthwork at Darenth Wood, Kent, unwanted flints from a nearby denehole were found at the bottom of the ditch. (Fig. 2) A section through the ditch revealed that the flints had piled up shortly after the ditch was dug, showing that the shaft had been sunk just after the earthwork had been completed. The result of Caiger's excavations (1) indicated the first half of the 13th Century for this particular double-trefoil denehole.

The earthworks of Joydens Woods, Bexley were the subject of a paper by A. H. A. Hogg in 1941. More recent excavations by Caiger and Tester (2) proved that the deneholes associated with the field boundaries must have been dug before 1280.

Old leases often contained covenants to ensure that chalk was regularly applied to the land. A statute of 1225 (10 Henry III) for example, gave every man the right to sink a marl pit on his own land.

From the above statements it can be safely asserted that the digging of the double-trefoil type of denehole was well established in the 13th Century. Deneholes were certainly being dug in Europe before this. The elder Pliny (A.D. 70) for example, describes the sinking of shafts for agricultural chalk:

"Petitur ex alto, in centenos pedes
Actis plerumque puteis, ore angustatis,
intus, at in metallis, spatiente vena."

("The chalk is sought from a deep place, the wells being frequently driven to 100 feet (30.480 m.), narrowed at the mouth, the veins spreading out within, as in mines.")

These earlier and rarer forms of denehole such as those Pliny describes must have existed, but because of the usual policy of back-filling a shaft as soon as it was finished with, they have not yet been recognised.

R. F. LE GEAR.

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- (2) Ibid. lxxii (1958) 18 - 39.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Regarding your articles about Anstey Castle and the cave at Cave Gate in Bulletins 3 and 4 reminded me of a visit I made to the area with a friend about 12 years ago. The date of the visit was about October 1965, but certainly no later than March 1966. My friend lived in Buntingford at the time and had heard the story of the blind fiddler and his dog, and also about the iron gates in the moat at Anstey. (Incidentally, have you thought of asking a local Sub Aqua club to investigate the moat?) (Any offers?) He also knew about an extensive mine entered near the old railway line south of Buntingford and we set out one evening to investigate both the 'cave' and the mine. (cont'd on page 16)

TYPICAL DOUBLE-TREFOIL DENEHOLE

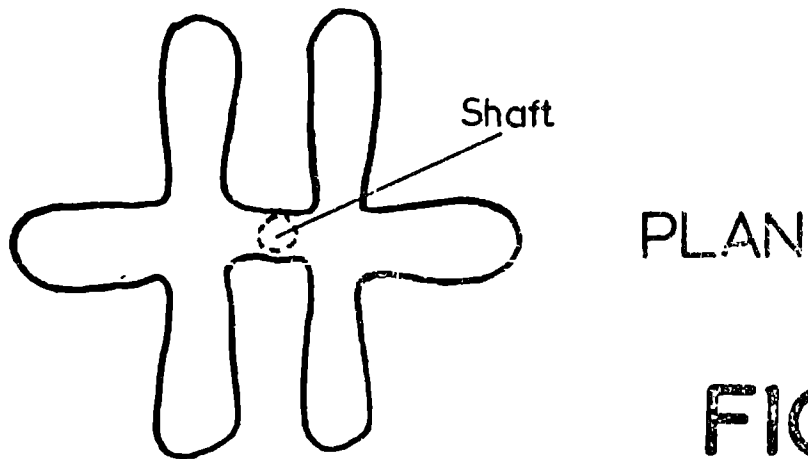
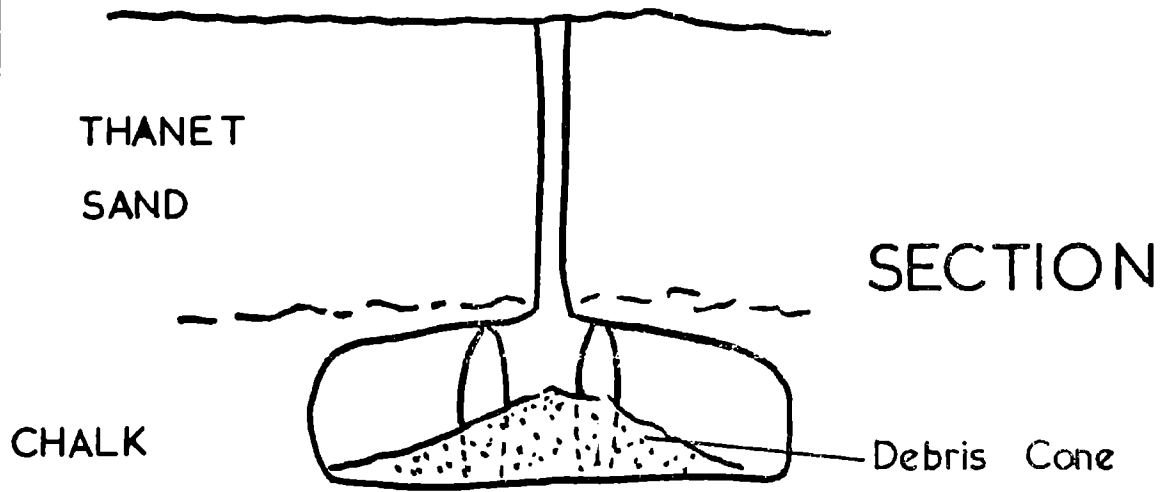


FIG. 1

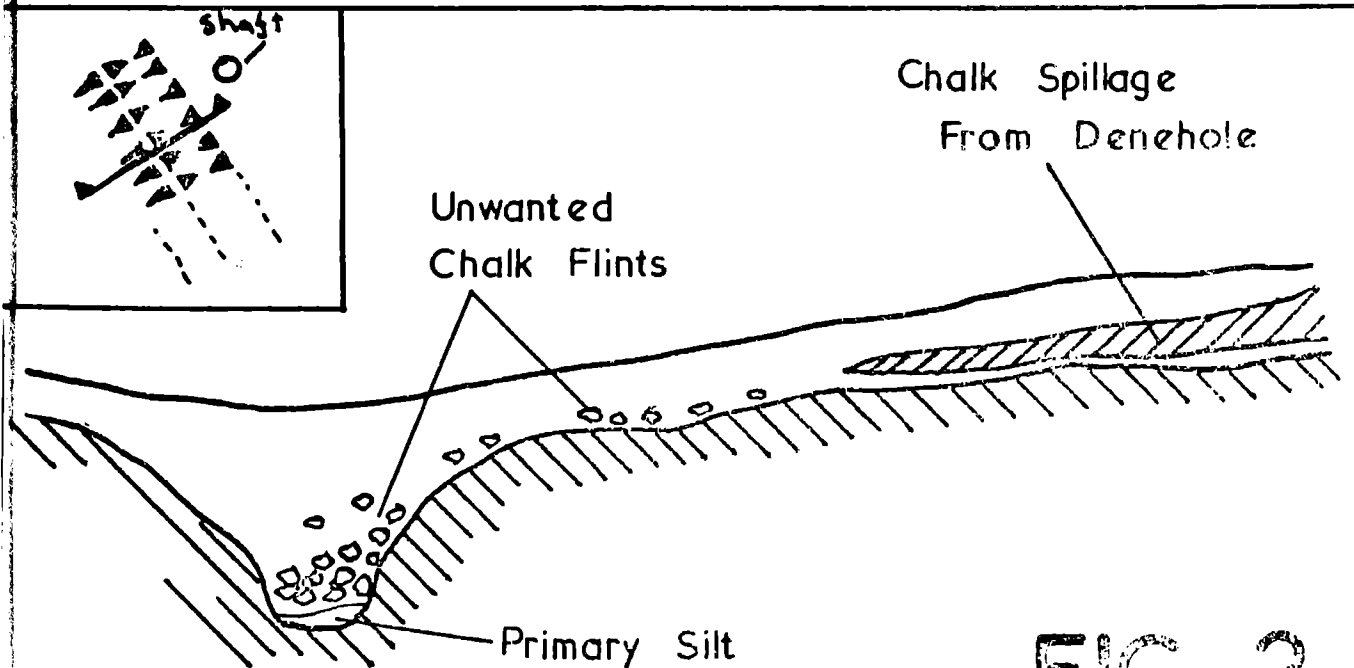


FIG. 2

THE DUNISKEY SOUTERRAIN, CO. CORK

LOCATION:

The souterrain is sited in an outcrop of rock which forms the E end of an old Red Sandstone ridge. There is a steep escarpment face at the S side of this outcrop. It is situated in the townland of Duniskey which is about 3 miles SE of the town of Macroom, Co. Cork. The present entrance to the souterrain is located at the top of the escarpment.

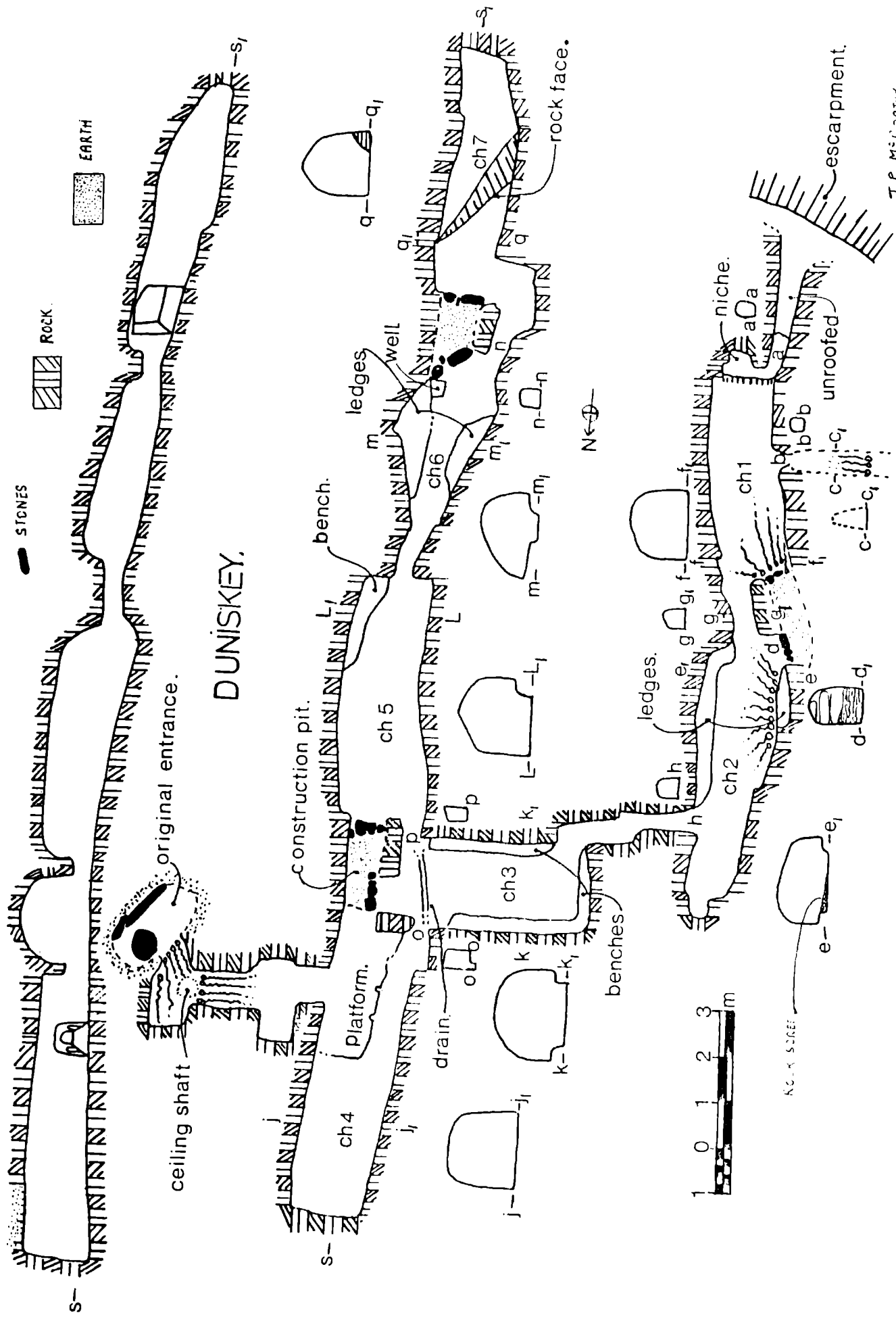
DISCOVERY:

The site was discovered in 1927 by a boy hunting rabbits. In 1930 an investigation of the site was undertaken by L. S. Gogan of the National Museum of Ireland and a short report was published in the Cork Examiner newspaper for August 20, 1930. The site was re-investigated and surveyed by the author between November 1976 and February 1977.

DESCRIPTION:

The present entrance to the site, which is modern, consists of a narrow tunnel partly unroofed leading into the south western corner of Chamber 1. The site is totally rock-cut. There are seven chambers. Chambers 1, 3, 4, 5 and 7 are rectangular in plan. Chamber 2 is wedge-shaped while Chamber 6 has an approximately triangular plan. The long axis of each chamber, excepting Chamber 3, is orientated NS. Chamber 3 has its long axis orientated EW. The chambers are connected to each other by means of creepways. Noteworthy is that creepway joining Chambers 2 to 3 which enlarges from a height of 50 cms. at its W end to over 1 m. at its E end where it enters Chamber 3. Leading west from Chamber 1 is a long passage entered by a small creepway from this chamber. The passage is not accessible due to a collapse of its ceiling. Gogan states that local lore claims the existence of a further chamber here. The ceilings of the chambers are barrel-vault shaped in cross-section. In the cases of Chambers 5 and 7 there is a slight pitch in the centre of the ceilings which allows an averaged sized person to stand upright in the chambers. The floors of the chambers rise in level from Chamber 1 to Chamber 3, the level falls from here with Chambers 5, 6 and 7. Rising from the floor of Chamber 4 upwards towards the ground surface are compartments, consisting of a passage and a small chamber, which lead to the original entrance to the site. These have been filled with soil which has crept in from the fill of the entrance area. The passage from Chamber 4 is 3 m. long, 80 cm. wide and 40 cm. high at present. There is a small niche in its N side. The small chamber measures 1.6 m. long 90 cm. wide and 60 cm. high at present. The original entrance area which is earth-cut and presently closed by two large slabs is 2.10 m. long and 1.20 m. wide approximately.

The site possesses several interesting and uncommon features which are not typical of Irish souterrains of the excavated type. In Chamber 1 there is a niche in the S wall which measures 45 cm. wide, 45 cm. high and 30 cm. deep. At either side of Chambers 2 and 6 are low ledges projecting from the walls. Those in Chamber 2 measure 40 cm. wide at the E side and 25 cm. at the W, their heights being 15 cm. In Chamber 6 their measurements are 80 cm. wide at the E side and 40 cm. at the W, with a height of 20 cm. In Chamber 4 at floor level at the SE side is a raised area (platform) measuring 2.85 m. long, 1.20 m. wide and 15 cm. high. There are two notches cut into the W edge of this measuring 10 cm. respectively. In the ceiling of that chamber inside the original entrance to the site, above where it enters the passage to Chamber 4, is a shaft leading toward the surface. It is closed with a slab above. Cut into the floor of Chamber 3 is a narrow shallow channel only 10 cm. deep. Water collecting on the floor of Chamber 4 is directed by a gentle fall in floor level along the channel to Chamber 5. Along the sides of Chambers 3 and 5 are rock-cut benches projecting from the N, S and W walls of Chamber 3 and



J.P. McCarthy

The Duniskey Souterrain (Cont'd)

from the S end of the E wall of Chamber 5. They measure an average 30 cm. wide and 30 cm. high in Chamber 3. That in Chamber 5 is 30 cm. wide and 40 cm. high. Impressed in the ceiling of Chamber 3 are the marks of the cutting edges of the tools used in the excavation of the site. In Chamber 6 is a square pit, 35 cm. square, cut into the floor which is filled with gravel. Gogan described this as a well. At the S end of the creepway from Chambers 6 to 7 is an 'ante' compartment measuring 1.50 m. long by 1 m. high. The E side of this opens into Chamber 7.

DIMENSIONS: (Maximum given)

	<u>CHAMBERS</u>						
	<u>CH 1</u>	<u>CH 2</u>	<u>CH 3</u>	<u>CH 4</u>	<u>CH 5</u>	<u>CH 6</u>	<u>CH 7</u>
Length:	4.60 m.	6.10 m.	4.20 m.	6.30 m.	5.35 m.	4.00 m.	5.40 m.
Width:	1.50 m.	2.00 m.	2.00 m.	1.80 m.	2.00 m.	2.00 m.	1.30 m.
Height:	1.25 m.	1.10 m.	1.55 m.	1.50 m.	1.60 m.	1.25 m.	1.50 m.

	<u>CREEPWAYS</u>					
	<u>CH1-CH2</u>	<u>CH2-CH3</u>	<u>CH3-CH4</u>	<u>CH4-CH5</u>	<u>CH5-CH6</u>	<u>CH6-CH7</u>
Length:	1.10 m.	3.00 m.	0.15 m.	0.40 m.	1.20 m.	0.60 m.
Width:	0.50 m.	2.60 m.	0.35 m.	0.40 m.	0.50 m.	0.40 m.
Height:	0.50 m.	0.50 m.	0.50 m.	0.50 m.	0.50 m.	0.45 m.
		at S and 1 m. at N.				

DISCUSSION AND COMMENTS:

AGE: The age of this structure cannot, on the basis of present evidence, be determined. If it is associated with and contemporary with, a church site said to have stood on the ridge above it upto 1853 - no trace of which now remains, then it would have been in existence by 1199 A.D. as indicated by the historical dates for the church given below. This, however, does not fix a foundation date for the church and neither does it exclude the possibility that the souterrain may pre or post date it. Factors which would contribute toward a medieval date for the souterrain are (i) its similarity in size and features such as benches, to medieval French souterrains some of which are found directly associated with churches (Blanchet 1923). (ii) the fact that as the souterrain is today partially flooded for 5 to 6 months of the year; a slightly warmer climate as would have existed in early medieval times would have allowed a longer period of use each year, presuming that the users of the souterrain desired it to be reasonably dry. (iii) the probability that souterrains associated with churches may have functioned as places of sanctuary in this period as discussed by Lucas (1971-3, 178-9) and as seen in the statement of Ger. Cambrensis concerning a 12th Century raid on churches in Connaught by Miles De Cogan, that he burned many of the churches here and all their provisions "Quae hypogeis subterraneis abscondere non pot-erant" .. which they were not able to hide in underground compartments. (Orpen 1968, 27).

Historical references to Duniskey Church: Evidence for the existence of the church of Dun Uisce or Agha-do is to be found in:

- 1) Decretal letter of Pope Innocent III to Bishop of Cork for 1199 (Bolster 1972, 87)
- 2) A list of clerical expenditure for 1437 (Bolster 1972, 331)
- 3) June 12, 1611 - James I granted Church to his nominee Sir Thomas Roper (Patent Roll, James I, P.226)
- 4) 1837 - Church "was a small building" and in ruins. (Lewis 1837, 582).
- 5) 1853 - ruins of church stood here to this date. (Lyons 1893, 211).

The Duniskey Souterrain (Cont'd)

CONSTRUCTION:

The construction of the site was undertaken from the bottom of three pits excavated from the surface to the required depth. These were filled with dry-stone masonry and soil upon completion of the site. The pits are located between Chambers 1 and 2, Chambers 3, 4 and 5 and Chambers 6 and 7. In area they measure between 1.60 m. and 2.10 m. long and from 60 cm. to 80 cm. wide. The excavation of Chambers 1, 2, 3 and 4 was effected with greater ease than that of Chambers 5, 6 and 7, as the upper levels of the bedrock possess a slaty cleavage whereas the lower levels of the rock possess a more dense structure making excavation more difficult.

FUNCTION:

The most likely functions, one or all of which, this site may have served are, as a place of i) refuge ii) concealment for goods, iii) storage for goods.

J. P. McCARTHY

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A REMARKABLE SOUTERRAIN IN EIDENGRUB - A NEW SOUTERRAIN IN THE AREA OF CHAM-RODING, GERMANY.

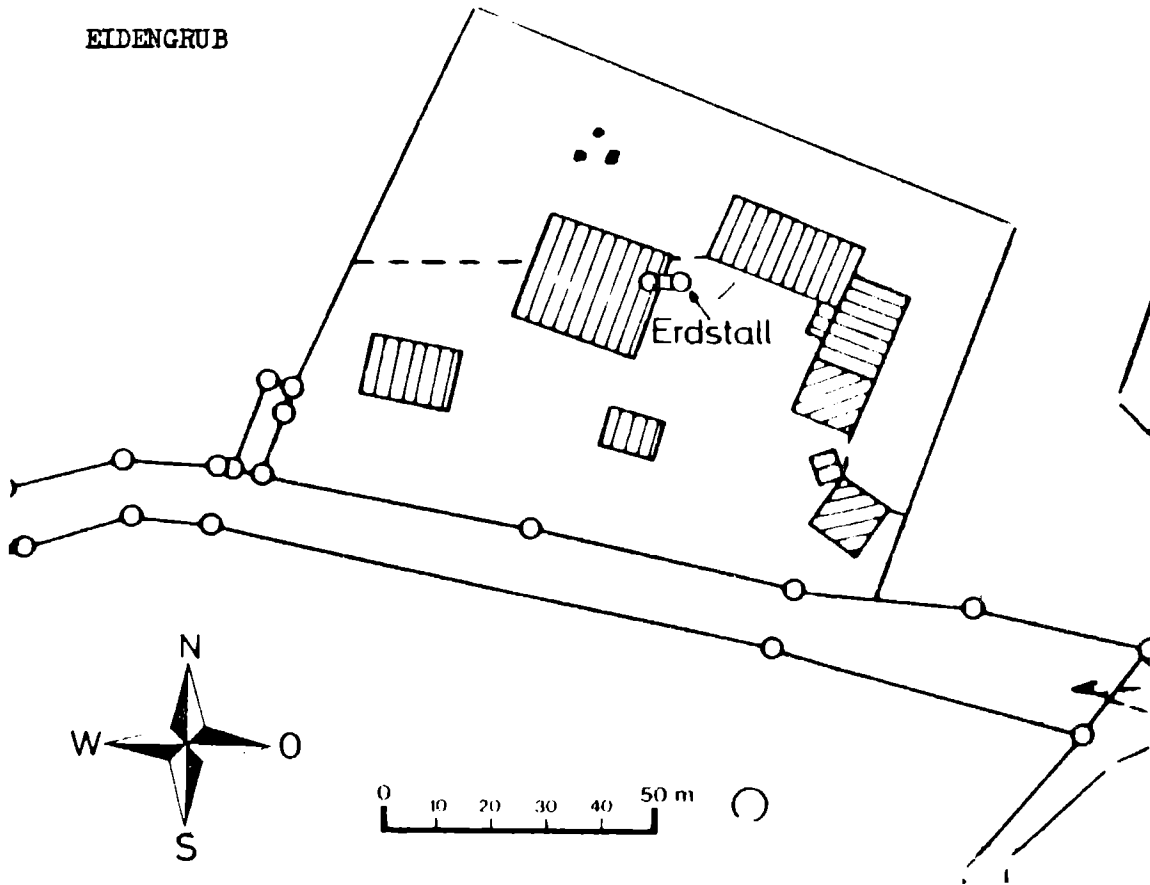
"There is a souterrain (Razelloch) situated in Dörfling, in the Church by the steps which leads to the stretcher/bier (Bahre). The subterranean passage leads to Eidengrub about 150 paces." (1)

LEGEND AND REALITY:

Legends have often proved reliable guides to historic places and this is illustrated here once more. The souterrain under the church of St. Ägidius in Dörfling has been known for a long time; its entrance is now filled-in with stones but nobody knew about a souterrain near Eidengrub.

In September 1967, while harvesting potatoes on Hubert Kerscher's farm in Eidengrub, a tractor wheel suddenly sank into the ground and an underground passage opened up in front of the owner. A new souterrain had been discovered. Of course, it has no connection with the Dörfling structure. Souterrains rarely have dimensions larger than 30 - 40 m., only the legends maintain they travel for several kilometers under mountains and valleys. In France also, there are legends that villages, castles and monasteries are connected with each other through underground passages (2) Possibly some souterrains exist in places mentioned in legends and people imagined these to be connected by passages.

EIDENGRUB



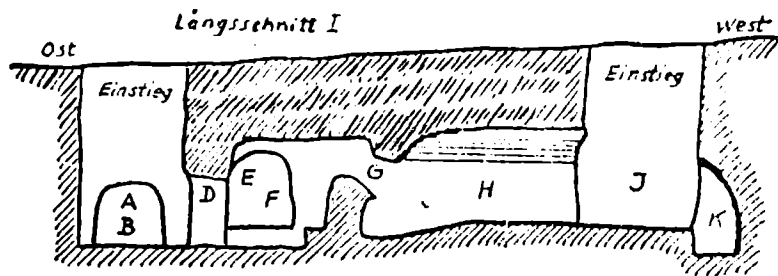
LOCATION:

The hamlet of Eidengrub is in the parish of Michelsneukirchen in the district of Cham about 8 kilometers from Roding. According to historical records the settlement consisted of four dwellings and existed in the 13th Century A.D. The farm on which the souterrain is situated has the Flurnummer (registry number ?) 1919 of the district of Michelsneukirchen and has been in the hands of the Kerscher family since 1875. Its former owners can be traced back to 1660. The present farm house is new; the old one laid S.W. in front of the souterrain and a grain store, which was demolished in 1924, immediately borders the south side of the souterrain. In 1966 $1\frac{1}{2}$ m. of soil was removed from the area above the souterrain. This had weakened the ceiling and led to the breakthrough of the tractor in the following year.

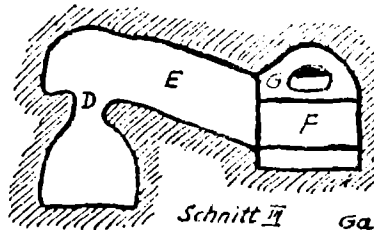
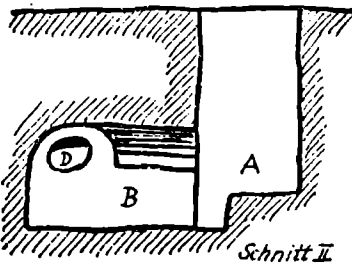
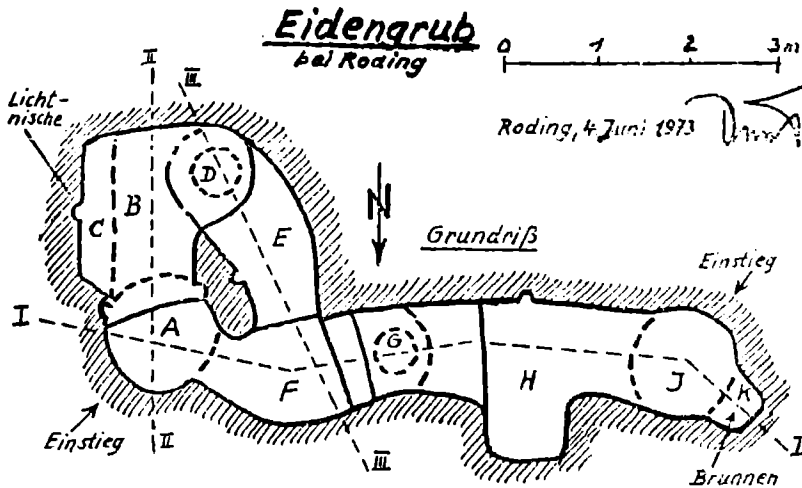
DESCRIPTION:

The souterrain had not been entered after it had been sealed and the owners knew nothing of its existence. What makes it seem remarkable is its original state and small dimensions. It had been dug in Granite interspersed with layers of Feldspar. (3)

In 1972 an opening was constructed which gave access to a round chamber measuring 1 m. in diameter (see diagram A). If one turns left in the chamber a step leads into a tiny assymetric room which was possibly an end chamber. The room measures 1.85 m. in length and 1.50 m. in width and only 1.15 m. high. At the foot of its E. wall is a bench (sitzbank) 0.40 m. wide and 0.15 m. high cut out of the rock (C). Above was a niche for light and a further four were found elsewhere in the souterrain. In the ceiling of the back of the chamber is a tunnel (creep) which leads upwards at an angle(D). It is oval in shape and 38 - 44 cm. in diameter. Its length is 56 cm. Through this difficult thoroughfare, we reach a short passage (E) which swings in a curve slightly to the right. It was 2.30 m. long, 0.80 m. wide and about 0.90 m. high. A step leads to a small chamber-like room 1.85 sq. m. (F). Its height does not exceed 1.20 m. On its eastern side there is a well-made narrow passage (0.85 m. in height and 0.60 m. length; it is between 0.45 m.



Plans drawn by
Schwarzfischer/Durst
1973.



and 0.60 m. wide). This curves to the round chamber (A). On the opposite side of the passageway there is an artistically worked niche. Its height, width and depth measure about 1 m. After a step there follows an 0.50 m. ledge finally formed into a rounded arch in which tool marks are clearly visible.

Between ceiling and ledge a second oval passage (G) (diameter 38 cm. - 45 cm.) which leads horizontally but slightly sloping downwards into a new chamber (H). Its length 2.40 m. and width over 1 m. makes it appear roomier than the other chambers, but we cannot stand upright in it either. Its differing height of 1 m. and 1.20 m. is caused by a sunken area (step down) in the centre of the room. A deep niche in the North wall, a bored hole in the base and a niche for a light on the opposite wall, complete the arrangement of this chamber.

Over a further step we enter the last room (J) into which the original entrance shaft presumably led. On the West side was a sump (K) filled with water, which overflows into the chamber.

THE INFILLING OF THE STRUCTURE.

When it was discovered the original arrangement of the souterrain could not be recognised. The round chamber (A) also chamber (J) with the suspected original entrance and part of the end chamber (B) were filled in. This is a

Eidengrub (Cont'd)

feature that can be found with all structures of this kind from Austria to France.

Contained in the infill of the souterrain were over 700 sherds of pottery and some charcoal. This is a surprising quantity if it is compared with the souterrain at Altnussberg near Teisnach in which only ten small fragments of pottery were found as well as animal bones and some burnt lumps of clay, although approximately the same amount of infill was removed from both.

The sherds recovered from Eidengrub are dated to the 13th or 14th Centuries. A conclusion can be drawn that during this period of time the structure could still have been in use. Its original construction could have been as early as 1st Century A.D. similar to other souterrains in South Germany. The study of place-names has suggested occupation in this area at that time. (4)

INTERPRETATION:

The Eidengrub structure shows that it could not have been built as a refuge. The narrow low rooms would not allow a long stay because air holes are absent and there would have been a lack of oxygen. There was only one entrance and no exit; the shafts and passages (creeps) were unsurmountable obstacles for the old and infirm. In the event of pillaging by fire of the neighbouring buildings, the fugitives would have been suffocated. If the enemy had discovered them below they would have smoked them out.

From sources it is known that when enemies approached the inhabitants of the countryside fled into the thick woods with their wives, children and cattle.

KARL SCHWARZFISCHER

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Thanks are offered to Mrs. Marianne Perrett for the translation.

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE, 1977.

Due to unforeseen factors it was not possible for the International Conference to take place at Barcelona, Spain in September. Instead an Exhibition was arranged at Vézelay (Yonne) France for the 9th July, preceded by a visit to the Fontaines Salées (salt springs) nearby. The Annual General Meeting (Assemblée Générale) was held in the afternoon.

Next day members visited a souterrain at Chantecoq, then onto Cortrat which is the little village where the Société Française D'Étude des Souterrains is registered. Finally, Abbé Nollent kindly invited those persons interested to return to Châtres-sur-Cher the following day. Two other study days were arranged for September.

SYLVIA P. BEAMON.

THE EXHIBITION ON 'THE WORLD OF SOUTERRAINS' AT VEZELAY (1977)

Mines and quarries, ancient or modern, can be called souterrains: their galleries have been excavated to extract minerals or building material and they are perfectly recognisable for what they are. Wine growers' or peasants' cellars are also common everywhere in France; they consist of a straight gallery with lateral cells, usually facing one another, and can be called souterrains.

Other souterrains are refuges against an enemy. Many were hewn during the Norman invasions of the 9 - 10 Centuries, and the Civil Wars of the 11th - 12th Centuries. They have rock-benches, silos to store grain, vertical ventilation holes and horizontal ones to identify anyone approaching. These shelters allowed the occupants to survive until the danger was over. Also not to be forgotten are the shelters in use between 1939 and 1945. At all times, besides the inhabitants of the village during wars and troubles, outlaws, persecuted minorities, 'heretics', conspirators, used such places to hide in or to hold their political or religious meetings. Such is Neuville-sur-Touques in Normandy with its 7 stalls for initiates, its circular gallery and what might be a terminal sanctuary. There are hundreds of such souterrains between the Loire and Garonne valleys.

But other souterrains are harder to explain: circular galleries round a large central pillar - winding galleries sometimes ending in a small chamber with rock-bench seats etc. In certain places which appear to be very similar, the objects deposited are quite different but probably very significant.

The Loire valley region particularly illustrates the fact that in early Christian times, tombs contained not only the familiar belongings of the deceased but also food for the next world. The rites were also performed at cenotaphs (graves without bodies in them). The Church tried, vainly, to suppress these customs. When people could no longer place their gifts in the grave, they performed their rites either in pits nearby, or near the house of the deceased. Many believed that such places then became the abode of the spirits of the dead.

Towards the middle of the 13th Century, such pits above, around or even inside older or especially hewn subterranean galleries seem to have been numerous. Remains of horse - the animal which transported souls during pagan times - their harness, and pieces of ceramic are common finds in such places. There are examples at Toury, Lumeau, Ruan and Selommes in Beauce north of Orleans. Also in Lumeau symbolic deposits were found: eggs, or balls which could represent them, bone rings, sharpening stones, thimbles, a blue stone or piece of glass, and fragments of pots all placed with great care. These symbols expressed respect for the memory of the deceased and the desire to see the family perpetuated.

One exhibit here, is material from a pit near a souterrain from Dadonville in Loiret. There were no horse bones in the deposit, but there was an arrow and a fine 14th Century polychrome pot. In accordance with ancient tradition, all the pots had to be broken, a symbolic 'death', only fragments of the neck remain to suggest their shape.

Other exhibits are more spectacular. At Toury, a horse's skull was found on a flat stone, at the bottom of a funnelled-out pit, with a thick layer of various animal bones and broken pots over it. Ritual offering of a horse was current in France during the pre-Roman Iron Age, c. 350 B.C. At Neuvy-en-Dunois, a deposit was found at the junction of two galleries hewn in the rock. Ribs and vertebrae had been placed on a levelled bed of earth together with a few 14th Century pot-necks and a snail. The sacrum, (the sacred bone) was beside it protected by a stone. Other stones, with the horse's skull placed on them, covered the whole deposit. Other ribs and vertebrae had been thrown directly in front against the wall. The gallery, after curving, ends in a small round chamber. Could this be the ritual home of the deceased ?

'The World of Souterrains' (Cont'd)

Aschères-le-Marché, Loiret is rich in souterrains. From the far end of a gallery in the village itself, the complete skeleton of a horse has been extracted showing the obvious marks of vertebral rheumatism. Possibly the animal was sacrificed as propitiation, or to obtain the healing of other horses in the stable. Only three feet were shod. Perhaps the fourth shoe was placed in the stable as testimony. Only a century ago, a farmer who consulted a Beauce sorcerer was told 'If you want to be freed from your evil charm, take a horse, bury it alive, in a standing position under the threshold of your farm'. Which was done !

St. Hilaire-St. Mesmin, Loiret provides a different example. A lateral cell had been excavated inside a well. It contained earth filling in two layers. The upper layer suggests funeral rites - a broken tripod pot was protected by three ancient tiles and a snail - the symbol of resurrection - was with it. Nearby, another snail was protected by a fragment of tile. The material of the lower layer was grouped around two wooden 'daggers', some 16th Century pottery, a part of a gun, etc. Only 50 meters away is the spot where the Duc de Guise was murdered by the Protestants in 1563. There is a traditional story of golden 'bayonets' hidden in the well. A similar case occurred at Bazoches-les-Hautes in a farm well. There, a wooden spear was at the centre of the deposit. On top of it were lamb bones dispersed by rats.

At the hamlet of Chaponeau, near Aschères-le-Marché, mole skulls were discovered - one in a small cavity in the roof of an underground chamber, and others at the centre of superimposed layers in a pit at the curve of a gallery.

Witchcraft is sometimes connected with souterrains; the Sybil's den was underground, so was the winter abode of Persephone, wife of Pluto. Cats' mandibles, carefully disposed at Chameul's farm in Chevilly, Loiret, are undoubtedly a sorcerer's deposit.

At Châtres-sur-Cher, south of Blois, the souterrain is very elaborate. Towards the end of the 19th Century it was the property of a villager who was supposed to be a 'sorcerer'. In two places, the souterrain was deliberately filled in to prevent access to the western part with its curious 'chapel', and deeper still, to a cross-shaped secret gallery with altars. Nothing in 1975 allowed us to guess its existence. Another chapel can only be reached by crawling to where there is a grave at the end of a low crooked gallery. Village boys are said to have played with skulls found there. The exhibits come from three locations. Near the modern entrance 4 small blocks of local limestone and a head were carved. On the floor of the western gallery between two of the ancient fillings were grouped; a head and separated body made of clay, a copper pin (alas, lost), fragments of the sole of a shoe. All were covered with lamb bones and local tiles. It appears to have been a magician's deposit. It included a prophylactic (triangularation) to prevent the curse rebounding on the sender.

On the steps of the central altar of the innermost secret chapel were found 10 human statuettes in limestone placed side by side, (see Fig. 2) and standing near them the strange presence of an oil lamp glass with its collar broken. Geologists point out that this chapel, hewn in a clay stratum, cannot be old, and this is confirmed by the date of 1870 carved on the front of a lateral chapel. (In 1870, the country was invaded by the Prussians).

If, in souterrains, graffiti and sculptures are rare and of little importance (apart from the strictly Christian sculptures of Brantôme in the Dordogne and Royston Cave near Cambridge) two extraordinary exceptions exist in France: La Roche Clermault and Denezé-sous-Doué in the Loire valley region.

At La Roche Clermault, near Chinon in Touraine, beneath the ruins of an 11th Century castle made famous by Rabelais, there exists a vast souterrain with narrow corridors leading to several big rooms hewn in the limestone. One of

DENEZÉ-SOUS-DOUÉ. Left, a nuptial ceremony. Right, a mother breastfeeding.



these rooms is of tremendous interest for on its wall there are carvings of two leopards and, over one of them, a carving of a man holding in his uplifted hands the symbols of the sun and the moon. His attitude, the sun symbol, his short dress, are all reminiscent of the 'heretic' Bosnian Bogomils of medieval times as represented on their funeral stelas. At his feet, two small sarcophagi have been excavated in the rock, and near to them, two hemispherical cup-marks. Medieval heretics were accused of underground orgies, the children resulting therefrom destined for later sacrifice. Perhaps the chamber was used to initiate children with the sacrifice of an animal rather than a child, as in the case of Abraham and Isaac, this would explain the presence of the cups near the graves. Small wonder that the Council of Toulouse, following the inquiries of the Inquisition, ordered in 1226 that all souterrains in France suspected of being used by heretics were to be destroyed or filled in; such was the case at La Roche Clermault. As far as dating is concerned, apart from the fact that the souterrain is under an 11th Century castle, the entrance door is of Romance style, both a fine wreathed column and the remains of another capital point to an 11 - 12th Century date.

Dénezé-sous-Doué, near Saumur, is, together with Châtres-sur-Cher and La Roche Clermault, one of the three most interesting souterrains in France so far discovered. It is an impressive cave (16 m. long), but unfortunately, its ceiling collapsed during the 18th Century burying and partially destroying some three-quarters of it under tons of rock and earth. Until recently, only part of it was visible, and nothing was published regarding it until 1960.

'The World of Souterrains' (Cont'd)

It contains a unique group of 16 - 17th Century sculptures of men and women, the major part only discovered in 1975 when A. Heron, together with a group of enthusiastic young archaeologists of the CAINO Society, made extensive excavations. Hundreds of representations of human figures are now visible - some wearing animal masks - placed all around the walls and more remain to be uncovered. There is a well in the centre of the cave (now protected by a cover), but it appears to be of an earlier date than the sculptures and already filled in when they were carved.

The significance of the carvings is difficult to establish. At nearby Doue-la-Fontaine, Rabelais saw and wrote of 'devilries' or carnivals with people masked and costumed. Perhaps they represent family festivities such as weddings or births, or country 'witch-doctors' healing their fellows. Included amongst the carvings are figures of women breast-feeding children and either singing or shouting at the same time; a religious procession; monsters or deformed people; naked men and women, some holding their sex organs; and musicians with bagpipes.

Perhaps the cave was the secret temple of a divinity specialising in family problems (weddings, births etc.), and the healing of certain diseases. It could have been used during the 16th - 17th Century by some kind of witch doctor who, to impress his congregation, carved these figures on the wall of his subterranean temple.

We owe a debt of gratitude to CAINO and its director, A. Heron, for bringing to light and restoring a piece of popular art as yet unique in France.

RAYMOND MAUNY

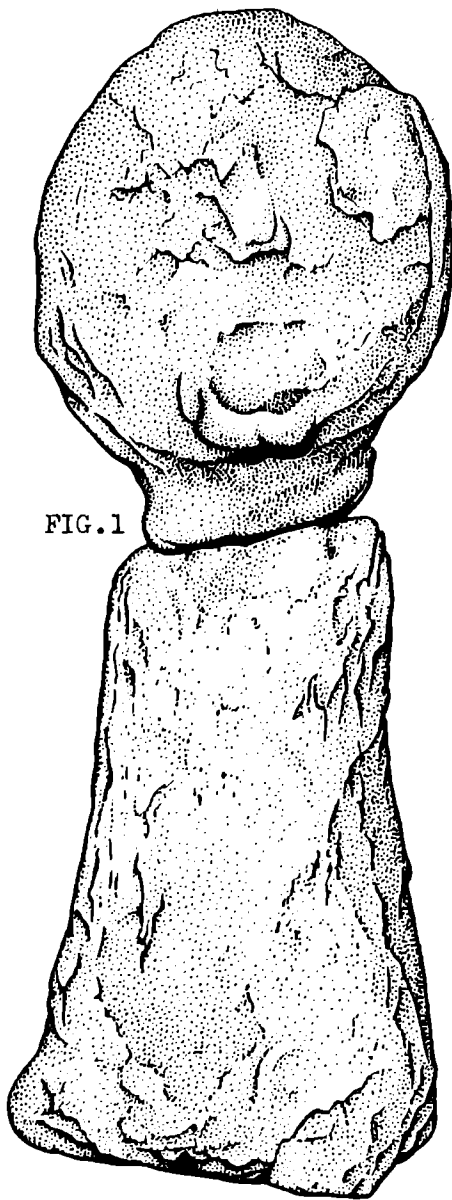


FIG.1

CHATRE-SUR-CHER

FIG. 1.

'Sorcerer's' doll
Height 17 cm.

FIG. 2.

Enigmatic figurine
Height 7 cm.

P. NOLLENT -
Esoterisme
souterrain a
Barbarant, 1976.

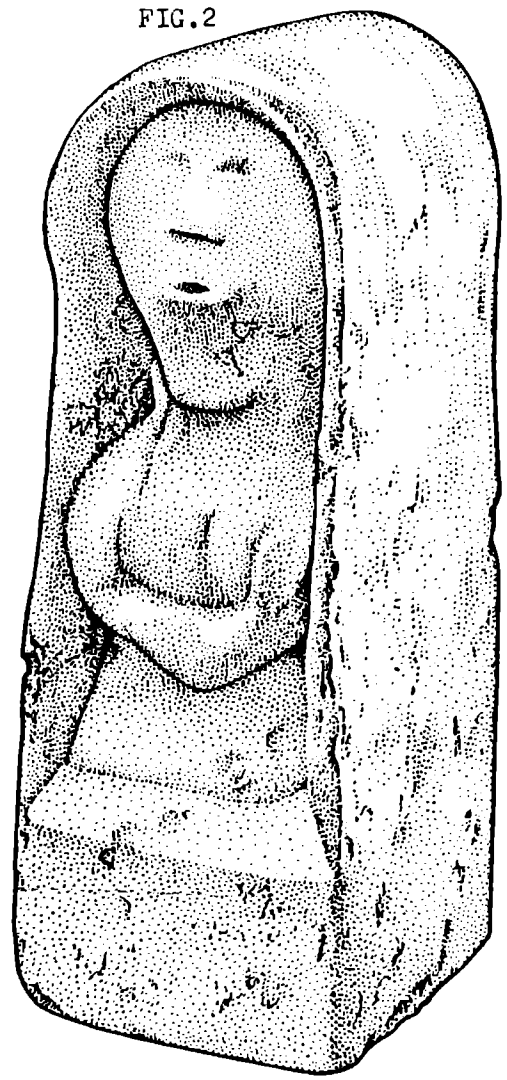


FIG.2

LETTER Cont'd from page 3.

The following notes are made from memory about 12 years later:

Cave at Cave Gate.

We parked in a layby just north of Cave Gate crossroads and made our way in the dark through some trees to the small pit which was fairly overgrown with brambles. There was no door to the cave, the entrance being a descending crawl which enlarged into the main tunnel. At the abrupt end of the cave was a shallow pit in the floor and a low passage about 2 m. long which it was possible to crawl into and which was obviously used by small animals. I also remember another tube used by animals near the entrance which was far too small to enter; this is not shown on the plan in Bulletin (4)p.6.

Disappointed at the shortness of the cave, which did not go very far at all towards Anstey Castle, we started to dig at the end to see if a continuation had been blocked. After deepening the final pit by perhaps 0.5 m., it was apparent that we were digging into undisturbed chalk and that the passage had never been longer. One amusing feature of the end of the cave was the occasional rumbling sound of cars passing overhead !

I tried to relocate the entrance to this cave in the summer of 1975, but the chalk pits appear to have been landscaped over in the enlarged garden of the bungalow at the crossroad. I would suggest that enquiries about the recent history of the cave should start at this bungalow.

Mine near Westmill

Driving from Cave Gate, we went along the A10 and parked down a side lane near the railway. This must be situated at NGR TL 373272 or possibly at TL 371276.

From the lane we climbed over a gate and walked north through a wood beside the east side of the line and after perhaps 200 m. climbed up the embankment to reach a fenced open pit situated just beyond the edge of the bank. A very old ladder allowed us to climb down about 3 m. onto the top of rubbish and debris in the pit and enter a passage heading east. This was a square cut tunnel, typically 2 - 3 m. wide and 2 m. high. It was not straight, and after perhaps 100 m., a narrower left turning was passed. The main passage ended at a roof fall of chalk blocks. The side passage, less than one metre wide, soon turned right so it probably continued parallel to the main passage. This passage also ended at a blockage of some kind.

There were no other side passages, and I do not remember seeing any artefacts. The mine must be approaching 200 m. in length, but ideas of returning to survey it did not materialise. I also tried to revisit this site on the same day in 1975 and went to TL 373272 which seemed familiar, although the railway line is now disused and other features have changed. However, where I expected to find the entrance pit was merely a ploughed field with no sign of the pit whatsoever.

TREVOR FAULKNER.

NOTICE:

MINES OF THE PEAK DISTRICT - 31st March to 2nd April, 1978. Course fee £25.00. to include accommodation with breakfast, packed lunches and dinners. There will be illustrated talks on Introduction to Derbyshire Lead Mining, Blue John Mining and working, Mining in Castleton. Visits to: Magpie Mine, Peak District Mining Museum, Masson Mine etc. Further details from Peter Townsend, Principal, Losehill Hall, Castleton, Sheffield, S30 2WB.

